

Auto Crashes Are the

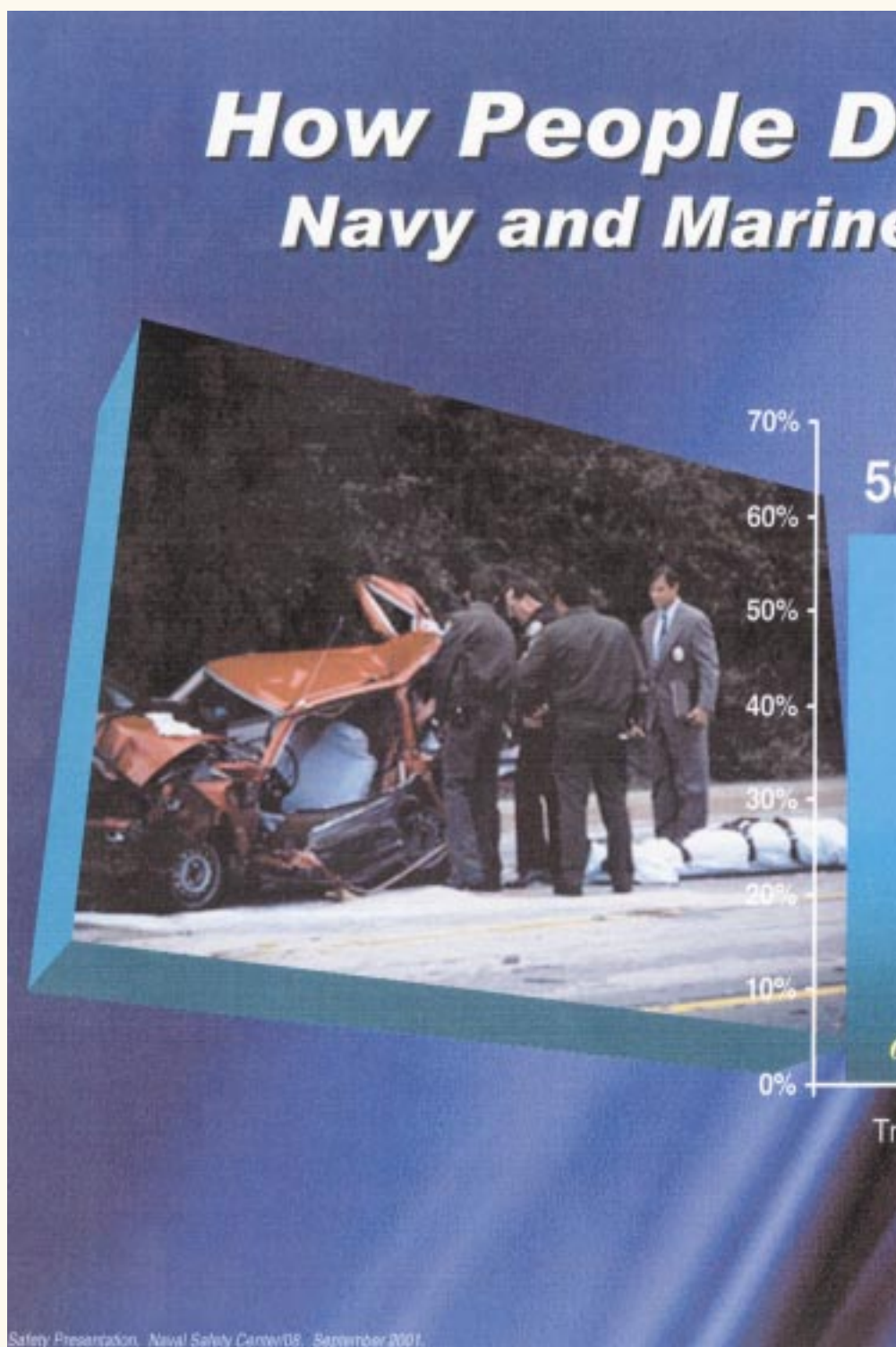
Don't think because you're assigned to a ship that you are exempt from traffic crashes. As the accompanying graph shows, there are countless more traffic crashes resulting in loss of life or permanent disability than shipboard mishaps. To emphasize this, let me share with you a story about one Sailor's misfortune distributed throughout the fleet as "Hazard Alert: Getting Control of Motor Vehicles." (ALSAFE 010/01)

One night a while back, the Naval Safety Center duty officer got a telephone report about a motorcyclist who had lost control of his bike and crashed into a guardrail. He crashed with such force that his foot was torn from his body. As terrible as that crash was, the Sailor survived.

As of July 2001, 46 Sailors and 26 Marines weren't so lucky—they all died from POV crashes, while scores of others have been injured. And we still are not learning from the tragic mistakes of others because many of the wrecks that claim the lives of our Sailors and Marines are similar.

The most common crashes are from losing vehicle control, speeding, and driving too fast for existing road conditions. Drinking and driving continues to be an ever-present occurrence, as does driving without buckling up. For many, operational risk management is a forgotten concept. When the key goes in the ignition, risk control seemingly goes out the window. It doesn't have to be that way.

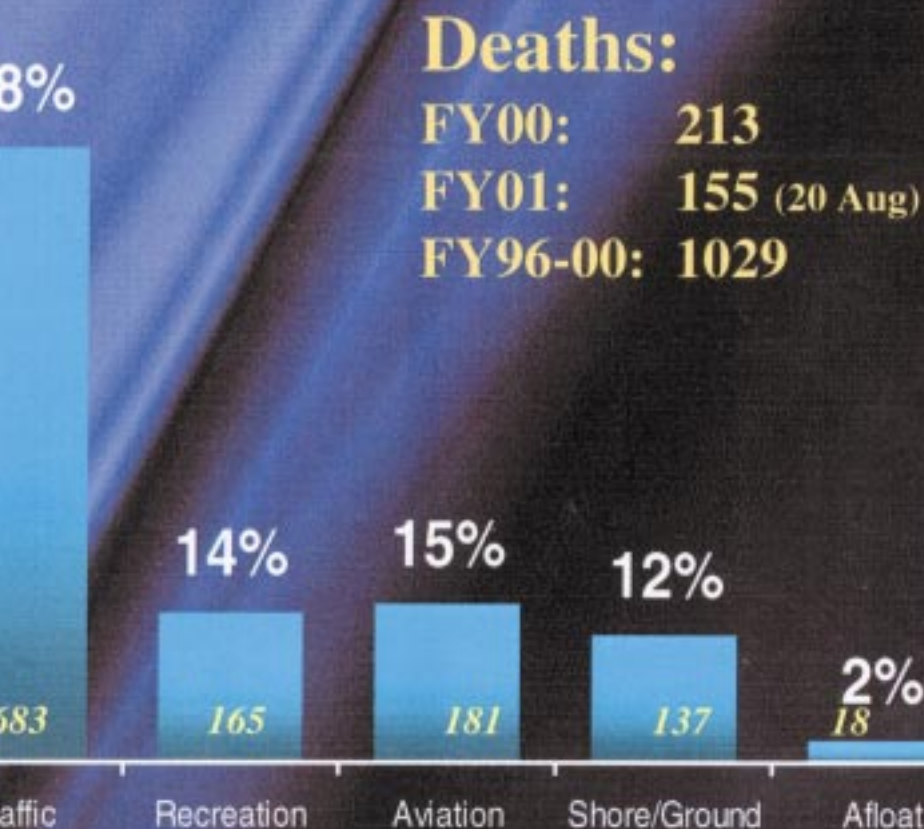
Let's put driving into perspective. One of the featured acts of a touring



Real Killers

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circus is Bello the clown. He performs daily and takes risks the average person wouldn't dare try. High on Bello's list are high-wire walking and riding a motorcycle on the wire while balancing a pole and keeping his eyes closed. Think for a minute about Bello's life: Extreme risks are part of his daily routine, yet he routinely completes his act without harm.

Even clowns know the importance of concentrating on what they're doing and being able to maintain control. When questioned about the importance of safety to his act, Bello responds with, "Safety is not expensive; it is priceless."

We can all learn a lot from a clown—safety is, indeed, priceless. You cannot put a price on human life. Maintaining control is what surviving is all about. We should always remember key ORM elements because it only takes a minute. Think about the hazards you're likely to encounter in any endeavor, identify the risks, and implement the necessary controls before you start. Apply the same to driving: Start every trip with a plan—a plan to survive.

For command safety officers I ask, "Is your traffic safety program up to speed? Are you aware of the sweeping changes to the Navy Traffic Safety program, OpNavInst. 5100.12G?" If you do not have a copy, you can get it free from the Naval Safety Center's website at www.safetycenter.navy.mil. Go to the "afloat" page and download it from there. While you're at it, browse the Safety Center site because it contains a wealth of safety information available to your crew. ☺